A Course of Instruction for Converts

by Bishop Thomas Shine

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Salvation - Faith

Religion means man's relationship with God. It therefore concerns God and the individual. God made man and made him for a purpose. Whatever an intelligent being makes, he makes for a special purpose. A watch, a chair, an engine, each is made for a special purpose. Why then was man made? He was made to know, love and serve God in this life and to be happy with Him for ever in the next. No aim short of this could satisfy the desires of man. God made man of body and soul and He made him to His own image. That image is in the soul. God is a spirit: so is the soul. It is difficult to conceive what is spiritual. It will help us if we take the example of a thought. A person says: "I have a thought in my mind." That thought is a reality, but it cannot be picked out of the mind like a nerve. It cannot be seen or touched; it is spiritual and is the product of the spiritual soul. Like God, the soul is immortal. During life it is the soul that enables us to see, to hear, to feel, to think, to remember, to reflect. When we die the soul leaves the body and the body becomes lifeless, but the soul itself does not die: it lives on and on for ever. In God there are three persons, yet God is one. In the one, indivisible soul there are three faculties-the memory, the will and the understanding. Since the soul is the seat of reason and the superior part of man, it is the more important part of man, hence we must take more care of the soul than of the body. Our Lord says: "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" Since God made us and made us that we might save our souls, it is most important to enquire how the salvation of the soul is to be accomplished. It is accomplished by the exercise of Faith, Hope and Charity.

Faith, using the word in a general sense, means believing certain things on the word of another. *Human* faith means believing certain things on the word of a fellow man. *Divine* faith, with which we are here concerned, means believing certain truths on the word of God. It is not uncommon to hear the remark: "I am not going to believe anything I cannot see for myself." A little thought will prove the remark to be a foolish one. Most of the knowledge possessed by any individual is knowledge based on human faith. How do we know that Julius Caesar lived, that the Battle of Waterloo was fought, that there is such a place as China, and that the food we had this morning was not poisoned? We know it on the word of others, for since we were not alive when Julius Caesar lived, and have never been to China, and did not see all the details of the cooking of our breakfast, our only means of getting the knowledge we now have on all these matters is the testimony of others. We know that men can deceive us; they may be mistaken in their knowledge and they are capable of distorting truth in communicating it. But God can neither deceive nor be deceived. If God tells me something, I am bound to believe it, whether I understand it or not, for not to believe it is to doubt or question God's knowledge or God's truthfulness. The great question then "Has God made known to us certain truths?" He most certainly has done so. He himself became a man and was called Jesus Christ and came on earth to teach a certain body of truths which we call Christianity.

He came to give us one complete religion - which is His own religion, the religion of Christ. That religion is made up of certain definite doctrines. To alter or add to or take from these doctrines would be to have a religion which was not the religion of Jesus Christ.

But Jesus Christ came to give His religion to all men to the end of time. It was to be a world-wide and an age-long

religion. Yet He lived 1,900 years ago and died at the age of 33. How did He arrange that all men to the end of time should have an opportunity of knowing that religion? He called round Him certain men, whom He formed into a Society: that Society we call the Church, and the men who composed it were called Apostles or messengers. Our Lord formed that Society or Church for one special purpose, namely, to deliver the message of His religion to men to the end of time. "Go," He said to it, "teach all nations. Preach the Gospel (that is, My religion) to every creature." That society must last as long as the work for which it was made has to be done. It must, therefore, last as long as there is a nation to be taught, as long as there is a human being left in the world. That society we call the Catholic Church. If it was to do the work it was made to do it was necessary that it should be preserved from error in delivering the message Our Lord gave it to deliver. Supposing a mistake had been made in the first century and two doctrines had been distorted in the second and three in the third, is it not clear that the religion of the fourth century would not be Christianity at all? Besides, Our Lord said to His Church: "Go teach all nations. . . . He that believeth (i.e., what you teach) shall be saved. He that believeth not (i.e., what you teach) shall be condemned." A just God could not condemn a man for not believing a teaching body if he thought that body capable of erring and deceiving. For the sake therefore of the faith of the believer and for the sake of the purity and integrity of the Christian religion itself, it was necessary that God should preserve His Church from error in handing on His religion. That preservation from error we call infallibility. Because the Church is infallible she commands our belief, for we can only believe for certain a Church which we know for certain cannot make a mistake in teaching us. Because she is infallible the body of doctrines which make up the religion Christ gave to the world are preserved in their purity and entirety. A Catholic can say: "I believe this truth, or that,

because the Church teaches it as a truth revealed by Christ," and in this he is reasonable, for he is first convinced by the right use of his reason that Jesus Christ established His Church to teach us His religion and made Her worthy of credence; in other words, made Her infallible. Besides, it is as easy to believe that the Church is infallible as that a book is inspired.

How does the Church teach? There are many ways that a teacher can adopt for the purpose of conveying knowledge. The Church has actually adopted two ways, namely, the oral method and the written. She has taught by word of mouth and by writing. The oral method we call tradition; the writings of the Church we call the Scriptures.

Our Lord gave no direction to the Church to write. He said: "Go preach the Gospel," and for the first thirty years of her existence the Church made use of the oral method only. Circumstances gave rise to her use of writing, or the Scriptures, in teaching Christ's religion. Whether we consider the Gospels or the Epistles we shall find that they were written for a special occasion, or people, e.g., to explain the difficulties of the Romans or the Corinthians. They were the Church's letters dealing with particular doctrines, prevalent evils, dangers to be avoided, virtues to be cultivated, and were never intended to be a complete treatise on Christianity. No one knows the true meaning of a letter so well as the person who wrote it; in fact, he alone can solve a doubt as to the precise import of a particular sentence of it. Because the Scriptures are the product of the Church, she alone is the authoritative and reliable interpreter of them. Sometimes it is said that the Catholic Church is afraid of the Scriptures and that she does not allow her people to read them. Nothing could be further from the truth. Without the Catholic Church there would have been no Scriptures. Was it not she who wrote them? Was it

not she who determined which of the many early Christian writings should be and be called the Scriptures? Was it not she who declared that they were the inspired word of God? And was it not she who preserved them? The printing press was not invented until the 15th century. Who was it that wrote with hand, copies of the Holy Bible during the first fourteen centuries of the Christian era? It was the monks of the Catholic Church. The fact that we have the Bible today and that long before the Reformation the Scriptures could be seen everywhere throughout the Church is due to their incessant labours. Not only is it not true that Catholics may not read the Scripture, but they are actually encouraged to read them and special privileges are granted to those who read them. A perusal of introductory letters written by Popes to our Bible will dissipate the idea that Catholics may not read the Bible. The Bible was not written in English. The English Bible is a translation: it is even a translation of a translation. It is for the Church, who is the guardian of Christian truth, to see that the translation is a correct one, therefore she desires her people to read an approved and sanctioned version of the Holy Scriptures.

The Church

The teaching of the Church is chiefly to be found in the Apostles' Creed. In the Christian religion there are mysteries. A mystery is a revealed truth which we cannot understand. Life is full of mysteries. What is clear to a man may be a mystery to a boy. What is easily understood by a very clever man may be a mystery to one not so gifted. What is a mystery to the ablest man would be fully understood by an angel. Who knows the actual nature of electricity? Who understands the process by which the tiny acorn becomes the mighty oak? Who understands the intricate mental and physical mechanism by which a man decides to go for a walk and move his limbs in a certain way to a certain place and at a given time elects to stop?

What incomprehensible intricacy of mind and will, of choice and command, of communication to nerves and muscles involved in any deliberate physical action! If there are mysteries connected with this life we must expect them much more to be connected with the next. When a thick fog comes down on the city like a great pall we walk gropingly through its streets and are unable to see even such prominent buildings as its town hall or its cathedral. But the fact that we cannot see these buildings does not mean that they are not in existence: it simply means that our eyes are not strong enough to penetrate through the mist. So, too, the fact that we do not understand how a certain doctrine made known to us by God is true merely means that our finite mind is not powerful enough to penetrate to the depths of that doctrine.

One of the greatest of mysteries is the Blessed Trinity. It means that there is one God, but that in that one God there

are three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Each is God. Each has the nature of God. Each is a Person, yet there is only one God.

Time was when God alone existed. There was no earth, no world, no angel, no man, no creature of any kind, no material thing. In time God created: He made worlds, He made creatures, He made animals, He made man. He made man for Himself, for eternal happiness. and endowed his soul with wondrous beauty, the beauty of sanctifying grace. But before giving man eternal happiness, God put him on his trial. His trial was one of obedience. Man failed in the trial, he disobeyed, and by disobeying he offended God and lost his right to Heaven. God took pity on fallen man and promised a Redeemer - one who should atone to God for the offence committed against Him by man and win back for man his lost right to Heaven. That Redeemer was to be Himself a man, for it was man who had sinned. He must also be God, for only a God could fully appease God. In due time the Redeemer came. He was the second person of the Blessed Trinity made man. His name was Jesus Christ. He was born on Christmas Day in the Stable of Bethlehem. His mother was Mary. He had no earthly father. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. Saint Joseph was His foster-father or guardian. That child who lay in the manger was really a human being, but as really was He God. He had two natures, human and divine, but one person, the Person of God, so that whatever He said or did it would be true to say that God said it, God did it. That child grew to be a boy and lived in Nazareth. He became a man and at the age of thirty began His public life, the work of preaching His religion. At the age of thirty-three He died. He was crucified on Good Friday at the desire of the Jews. He died because He willed it and by His death He wrought our salvation. When He died His soul left His body and went to Limbo, a place of rest where the souls of those who had died in the friendship of

God remained till Heaven should be opened for them by the Redeemer. His body was buried in a tomb, but on Easter Day His soul was re-united to the body, which was now a spiritualised, glorified body, and Our Lord rose from the dead. For forty days He remained on earth, perfecting His work and the machinery of His Church, and on Ascension Day He went up into Heaven, whence He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

Before His Ascension He had made the framework of His Church. It was as in the beginning when God first made the body of man and then breathed into it a living soul, so on Whit-Sunday the Holy Spirit came into the Church as its living soul to remain with it for ever. When we speak of the infallibility of the Church, we must remember that it is the Holy Spirit in the Church that is the source of its infallibility. The Church is His mouthpiece, speaking His truth, and is preserved by Him from error. When Saul had been persecuting the Church he was mercifully confronted by Jesus Christ, Who said to him: "Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*." Saul had not persecuted Christ in person; he had persecuted Christ's Church. Our Lord identified Himself with the Church: it is His mystic body, of which the Holy Spirit is the soul, therefore He said of it: "Who heareth you heareth Me."

There is no doubt that Christ founded a Church, that that Church is an infallible teacher, that she is now in existence, and that there is and only can be one such church. How can we find her? Since she is so important in her mission and work and was established for the salvation of men, it must be easy to find her. She is described as a "city built on a hill," which all can see without difficulty. There are certain marks, of which Our Lord tells us, by which the Church can be easily discovered. First, the true Church, the Church of Christ, is *One*. Not only is there only one Church, but that

Church has unity. Reason itself tells us there can be only one church founded by God. God could not contradict Himself. He could not be the founder of warring sects. There are in England today over 200 religions, or churches, all at variance with one another. One teaches that there is only one person in God, another that there are three. One teaches that there are seven sacraments, another that there are only two. These contradictory teachings cannot come from the God of truth. Only one church can be true and that one Church must itself have Unity. Our Lord on the night before He suffered prayed for this Unity * that His Apostles and all who through them should believe in Him might be one "as the Father and I are One, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." The Unity of the Church was to be like the unity of the Persons of the Trinity, and this Unity was the mark by which the world could recognise the divine mission of Christ. Where is that unity - unity in doctrine, unity in worship, unity in government - to be found? Only in the Catholic Church. Wherever we go throughout the world, whatever be the language spoken there, or the condition of the people who live there, we shall find the same Catholic doctrines taught and believed, the same Sacrifice of the Mass, as the people's worship, the same spiritual government of the See of Rome, the successor of Saint Peter, to whom Our Lord committed the government of the Church. "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church. I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (which is the name given in the Scriptures to the Church). Feed My lambs. Feed My sheep." The Unity of the Catholic Church is undeniable; it is miraculous and could only be accounted for by the fact that the Catholic Church is the Church of God.

Another mark of the true Church is that implied by Our Lord when He said to His Church: "Go teach all nations, preach the Gospel to every creature." There was to be one church for all nations. One Gospel for every creature, taught by the

one Society He founded for that purpose. In other words, the Church was to be universal or Catholic, not one church for one country and another kind of church for another, each contradicting the other; no, one Catholic Church. What Church is universal? What Church is recognised and acknowledged to be universal or Catholic? Is it not the Church which is ever and everywhere called Catholic? In every country she is to be found, and there is no country that is Christian today which did not originally receive its Christianity from the Catholic Church. Saint Augustine, the Apostle: of England, was a Benedictine monk, sent from Rome by Saint Gregory. Saint Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, was sent from Rome by Pope Celestine. It was the Catholic Church that first introduced Christianity into America, and there is no country in Europe that does not acknowledge an Apostle who owed allegiance to Rome as the Messenger of its Faith.

Another mark of the true Church is Apostolicity. The true Church is that Church which can be traced back to the Apostles. Go back through the centuries, back to the first age of Christianity, and you will find in the pages of history the unmistakeable Catholic Church, with her Pope and her Mass and her saints. She comes down to us in unbroken continuity of doctrine, worship and spiritual rule from the days of the Apostles. This can be said of none other.

The truths committed by Christ to His Church can never be added to, taken from, or corrupted, but they can be developed and grow in clearness. When a particular doctrine is denied or questioned, the Church declares that that doctrine is part of the revelation entrusted to her by God. Such a declaration is called a definition, A definition does not then mean the addition of a new doctrine, but the emphatic assertion that the doctrine defined has always been the object of Catholic belief. The Immaculate

Conception and Papal Infallibility are examples of defined doctrines.

Sanctity is also a mark of the true Church. The Church of God is surely a Church that teaches holy doctrine and gives to her members the means of holiness and actually produces saints. The Catholic Church has ever taught holy doctrines, has ever held up a high standard of morality; gives abundant means and ample opportunities of grace, and numbers among her children hundreds of saints. A saint is not merely a good man or woman. A saint is a hero in virtue. Where outside the Church could we find a Saint Clare, a Saint Teresa, a Saint Francis of Assisi, a Saint Vincent de Paul?

If the Catholic Church is the true Church, the one Church of Jesus Christ, it follows that all are bound to belong to it. God must wish all to be members of His true Church. To say otherwise would be to imply that God is indifferent to truth, that He does not care whether we believe what is true or what is false and consequently that He does not care whether we say what is true or what is false. Such a conclusion would not only be subversive of all social morality, but would lead to a denial of the very existence of God. Besides if God wishes all men to be saved and made the Church as the great and effective instrument of salvation - "as the Father sent Me, I also send you" - it follows that He must wish all to place themselves in a position to take advantage of the Church's mission.

What then are we to say of the fate of those who are not Catholics? Does the Church teach that they cannot be saved? Certainly not. Either a non-Catholic knows that the Catholic Church is the true Church or he does not know. If he does not know, he will never be condemned because he was not a Catholic. If he does know, he either realises that he has

a grave obligation to be a member of the Catholic Church, or he does not. If he does not realise that he is under such a grave obligation he will not be condemned. If he does realise that he is under a grave obligation to become a Catholic, and refuses to do so, he is living in grievous sin, and should he die in that state without repentance he would be condemned. It is possible for anyone to save his soul if he acts according to the light that God gives him.

Arising out of the fact that there is only one true Church is the explanation of the attitude of Catholics towards the worship of non-Catholics. The reason for that attitude will be seen further on.

When we say that a church is false we do not mean that it does not teach certain true doctrines. At one time the only religion of England was the Catholic religion. At the command of Henry VIII, an immoral ruler, and Queen Elizabeth, his daughter, a command carried out by persecution and death, another religion was established in the land which retained some of the old Catholic truths, but renounced a great part of the teaching of Our Lord committed to the Catholic Church, v.g., the Mass, prayers to the Saints, Purgatory and the Primacy of Saint Peter. As a Church, that new religion was not the true Church of Christ.

Sin - Saints

Sin is an offence against God. It is an act of disobedience against God. It is a breaking of the Commandments of God. The soul has a two-fold life - the natural life, which it can never lose, and the supernatural life. The supernatural life of the soul is the life of God in the soul, the life Our Lord so often referred to: "I am the life." "I am come that you may have life." When we are in God's grace or friendship, God dwells in the soul and He becomes a superadded life of the soul. Some sins, Saint John tells us, are unto death. Some sins are not unto death. The more grievous sins are sins unto death, or *mortal* sins. They are so called because they deprive the soul of its supernatural life; they drive God out of the soul; and since life eternal is the continuation and glorious development of that life of the soul, it follows that they who die in that condition of soul, when it is not in possession of supernatural life, cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Saint Paul gives a list of some of these mortal sins: murder, drunkenness, adultery, etc. "They who do such things," he tells us, "shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." There are sins that are small in comparison with mortal sins, such as impatience, a small theft, a simple lie, slight anger. These are called *venial* sins, and though they are offensive to God and cause estrangement from God, they do not drive God out of the soul: they do not deprive the soul of its supernatural life.

Death will come to all. After death judgment. The moment the soul leaves the body it is judged by Jesus Christ. It is then in one of three states: either entirely free from sin, or stained with venial sin, or stained with mortal sin. If entirely free from sin and there is no debt of atonement due because of past forgiven sin, the Judge will send that soul to Heaven.

If there is mortal sin on the soul, the sentence is: "Depart from Me, you accursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." What of the soul that is slightly stained? Heaven can not now be its portion, for nothing defiled can enter Heaven, nor can Hell, for that soul has not broken with God. Where then is the place for that soul? Purgatory. Purgatory is a place or state of punishment where such a soul will suffer for a time, and when it is purified it will enter Heaven. Heaven and Hell are eternal. Purgatory is only for a time.

If sin is repented of it will be forgiven. But when our sin has been forgiven we have not necessarily finished with it. Our law courts and prisons remind us that certain satisfaction or atonement should be made even for sin forgiven. Our first parents sinned: they repented, they were forgiven. Yet they had to suffer for years afterwards because of their sin. Moses sinned, he repented and was forgiven, yet because of his sin he was deprived of the privilege of entering the Promised Land. David sinned, he repented; God sent him the Prophet Nathan to convey to him the message of forgiveness, but the prophet also told him of the temporal punishment of his sin: "Your son shall die." Some, by their penances and trials, make full satisfaction for all their sins in this life. Some do not. These latter are not relieved of the obligation of justice; it has to be fulfilled in the life to come. Where? In Purgatory. Two classes of souls, then, go to Purgatory: those who die in venial sin and those who have not fully atoned for mortal sin which has been forgiven.

The Catholic Church was made by Our Lord to continue His work. "As the Father sent Me, I also send you." She was given, therefore, the power and means to do that work, the work of salvation. "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth," He said to her, " shall be loosed also in Heaven." Only two things can keep a soul out of Heaven - sin and

unaccomplished atonement. Over these the Church has power. As we shall see later, she has power over sin. She has also power over atonement. She has at her disposal the merits of Our Lord, the merits of His suffering. She has also in her keeping the unused merits of her saints. In order to attract her children to prayer or to works of charity for the good of their souls, she sometimes relieves them of the work of personal atonement to which they are obliged because of past sin for which by God's grace they have repented. The sin is no longer on their souls, but the duty of personal atonement remains. The Church on occasions relieves them of this duty because of some special good work and acts of piety, and to fulfil justice puts in place of their own personal efforts the merits of Jesus Christ and of His Saints. This relief, granted by the Church, we call an Indulgence, or Pardon. An indulgence always presupposes that the soul is free from sin. If it is only a partial remission of atonement it is called a *Partial* Indulgence, if a full remission it is called a *Plenary* Indulgence.

The Church is divided into three parts: the Church on earth, which we call the Church Militant, the Church in Purgatory, which we call the Church Suffering, and the Church in Heaven, which we call the Church Triumphant. These three communicate one with another. We on earth can help the souls in Purgatory by our prayers. The Saints in Heaven can help us by their prayers. This intercommunication we call the Communion of Saints.

Some there are who wonder why Catholics pray to the Saints; they even think that it is not right to pray to the Saints. A little reflection will show that it is a most reasonable practice. Are we not told in the Scriptures to pray for one another, and that the prayer of the just man availeth much? Did not Saint Paul ask those to whom he wrote to pray for him? If you were to ask a certain man now living in

your town to pray for you, you would be asking according to the counsel of the Scriptures and the practice of the Apostles. If that man were a saint and died tomorrow, he would go straight to Heaven. Why, if it was right to pray to him yesterday, is it wrong today? How could his change of position affect the morality or wisdom of your actions? Why should his power be less in Heaven than when he was on earth? Surely it would be greater. He is now confirmed in grace, and close to God. You must not say that when he lived in your town he could hear you, whereas now he cannot hear you. What is more intimate or secret in man than the act of repentance by which at a certain moment his condition changes from a state of sin to a state in which God goes to dwell in his soul? Yet even that change, that no one on this earth could see, is known to the Angels and Saints of God, as we learn from God Himself. When we ask the Saints to pray for us we ask them to do precisely what we ask any living friend of ours to do when we say: "Pray for me." We want those dear to God to back up our petitions and to join their voices with our own in asking God for the favour or grace He alone can give.

Of all the Saints, there is none to whom we pray more than to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, simply because she is His mother. Just as at the Cana marriage feast, Mary, seeing the difficulty of her hosts, said to her Son: "They have no wine," and He converted water into wine in answer to her prayers, so we tell her of our needs and troubles and beg her to lay them before her Son.

We not only pray to the Saints, we also honour them. We are told in the Scriptures to "Honour all man." There are some to whom we are told special honour is due. "Honour the king." "Honour thy father and thy mother." What is the principle that regulates honour so that we give to some more than to others? The same kind of honour is given to all, the

difference is in degree. The principle is this: the more of God or godliness there is in a person the more honour is due to him. Our parents are God's instruments and take God's place with regards to their children. The King is the instrument of God's rule with regard to his subjects. Hence the special honour to parents and rulers. Sanctity is another name for godliness or union with God or the life of God in the soul. The greater the sanctity the closer the union with God and the more intimate the life of God in the soul. Hence the high degree of honour given to a Saint and the extremely high degree of honour given to Mary, to whom God said, through Gabriel: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." She was so closely united with God that He and she lived for many months a common life. Hence the Angel Gabriel honoured her, and Saint Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, honoured her, saying: "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me," and Mary herself, inspired, said: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me. Behold, all generations shall call me blessed." In reality, in honouring Mary and the Saints we are honouring God, for we are honouring them for their godliness, for the great things He has done in them.

We call Mary the *Mother of God*, because she was the Mother of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is God. When we speak of relationship we take persons into account, not *natures*. We say Mrs. Smith is the mother of John Smith, though she only gave him his body; his soul was created by God. She is the mother of that *person* called John Smith. We know that Mary did not give Jesus Christ his Godhead. He was always God. Jesus Christ had two natures, human and divine, but one *person*, the person of God. Mary was the mother of that Person Jesus Christ and He was God.

Hope

Hope is a trust in God that He will give us Heaven and the means to attain it if we keep His Commandments. God is Almighty and can save us; He is all-good and therefore desires to save us; He is faithful to His promises and has promised to save us. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep My Commandments."

The way of the Commandments is the way to Heaven. The only test of our love for God is the Keeping of His Commandments.

Each Commandment enjoins certain obligations and forbids certain sins. Sin can be committed by thought, word, deed or omission. To commit sin we must know that the particular thought, word, deed or omission is a sin and it must be done deliberately. An evil thought is only a sin when it is deliberately harboured and consented to.

The first Commandment enjoins the worship of God. A Catholic may not take part in non-Catholic worship. This is not bigotry, it is principle and truth. Catholics believe that there is and can be only one true Church. That one true Church is the Catholic Church. This being so, they necessarily believe that all other Churches are not true. Many of the doctrines taught by other Churches are true, but as Churches, each claiming to be the Church of Christ, they are false. To take part in the worship of a Church which one believes to be false is to approve outwardly of what we inwardly believe not to be true. It is therefore acting a lie.

One of the chief sins forbidden by the first Commandment is idolatry, which means giving to any creature the honour due to God alone. This sin is committed a great deal in pagan

countries, where a statue is looked upon as a God and worshipped as a God.

What is to be said of the honour given to statues and pictures in the Catholic Church? It is perfectly reasonable, as the following considerations will show: when a great statesman, ruler, soldier or benefactor dies, how, generally speaking, is his memory perpetuated? A statue of him is erected. Such statues can be seen in the squares and parks of all our large towns and cities. The greatest Benefactor the world has ever known was Jesus Christ. The noblest Queen that ever lived was His Mother. The truest heroes of any country or age are the Saints of God. How natural and reasonable then to erect statues of Our Lord, Mary and the Saints. We know well that a statue is a lifeless thing and can neither see, nor hear, nor help us. But just as we honour the image or portrait of a parent or a friend, so we honour the images of Christ and His Saints. Who has not seen a mother kissing the portrait of her child? Her attitude towards that portrait is exactly the attitude of Catholics to statues and pictures, and the honour she showed it is the honour they show to statues. In reality, it is not shown to the statue at all, but to the person represented by the statue. The principle is the same when displeasure or dishonour is shown to an effigy - it is really intended for the person whom the effigy represents. Besides, statues and pictures bring home to us better than words can do certain truths and facts. No description could give so vivid a notion of the death of Our Lord as is given by a crucifix. Again, a crucifix, or statue, or picture, helps us in prayer to fix our minds on God. For this reason Catholics commonly pray *before* statues, but never *to* them.

The second Commandment obliges us to reverence for God and the name of God and all things sacred. Reverence is like a fence round a cornfield. Break down the fence and

trespassers will soon ruin the corn. Take away reverence and in time all other virtues will suffer in the soul. The sins against this Commandment are cursing, swearing, blasphemy. Cursing means the expression of an evil wish to one's neighbour. Swearing or taking an oath means calling God to witness the truth of what we say. It is lawful to take an oath when our own good, or our neighbour's good, requires it. To take a false oath is the grievous sin of perjury. Blasphemy is irreverent references to or abuse of God, His Saints or His religion.

The third Commandment is peculiar in its wording: *Remember* thou keep holy the Sabbath Day, as if to say: Whatever else you may forget, do not forget to keep God's Day holy. In the New Law the day to be kept holy is Sunday, the day on which Our Lord rose from the dead and the Holy Ghost came down on the Apostles. Every Catholic is bound to go to Mass on Sunday unless prevented by some serious cause. In order to be able to keep Sunday holy we must rest from work. All unnecessary servile or bodily work is forbidden. Recreation and works of the mind when kept within reasonable limits are not forbidden, nor is necessary work of any kind forbidden.

The fourth Commandment obliges us to love, honour and obey our parents and to give reverence and obedience to our lawful superiors. Any neglect of this duty is sinful.

The fifth Commandment is "Thou shalt not kill." Apart from the taking of life in lawful war and in capital punishment as meted out by the State, murder is a grave and terrible sin. We may not even take our own life. It was given us by God and only God may take it from us. Whatever tends to murder is wrong: all quarrelling, fighting, hatred, anger and revenge.

The sixth Commandment is: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." It obliges us to self-control, to watchfulness over our senses, particularly the eyes, for they are the windows of the soul. Impure thoughts which we willfully indulge and deliberately consent to, unchaste desires which we deliberately entertain, the speaking of impure words, the reading of sensual books, the deliberate and pleasurable gazing at impure sights or pictures - all that is sinful. Sinful also are all impure acts, which are doubly so when they involve another. Purity is one of the most beautiful of all virtues, one of the most necessary in society and one of the most essential for a spiritual life. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

The seventh Commandment is concerned with the virtue of justice. "Thou shalt not steal." It is unlawful to take against his will what belongs to another, or to injure him in his property. Nor can the sin be forgiven unless the stolen property is restored and the injury made good if it is in the power of the person who has committed the injustice to make restitution. Even if it is not in his power now he must sincerely intend to make restitution when he is able to do so.

The eighth Commandment is concerned with truthfulness. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." A lie is always sinful. A lie that involves serious consequences is gravely sinful. A lie that injures a neighbour's character is called the sin of *calumny*. It implies an injustice and restitution must be made of the good name that has been taken away. Another sin against the eighth Commandment is *detraction*, which means revealing the secret faults of another.

The ninth Commandment is: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife."

The tenth is: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods."

Besides the Commandments of God, there are the *precepts of the Church*, which particularise and specify obligations placed on us by God. For example, God says to us: "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day." The Church tells us how to keep it holy. God tells us that "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you." The Church informs us how often we are bound to receive Holy Communion.

We are obliged to hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation. This is a serious duty, from which only a serious reason can dispense us. Such serious reasons would be distance, health, necessary occupations. All Catholics are so conscious of this duty and attach to it so great importance that it would be a cruel injustice to make it unnecessarily difficult or impossible for them to perform it.

Every Catholic is bound to go to Holy Communion at least once a year, any day between Ash Wednesday and Low Sunday, both days included. That is the minimum. A good, earnest Catholic will receive Communion at least once a month. Many are weekly communicants. A large number communicate even daily.

The work of our Catholic parishes is done entirely with funds contributed by the people. The building, repairs and upkeep of our churches, presbyteries and schools, the support of our clergy, the expenses in connection with worship, the lighting, heating and cleaning of our churches, all is done by the people, who regard it as a duty to contribute to this purpose. Without their contribution the work of the Church could not be done. It is therefore one of the Church's precepts that the people should contribute to the working of their parishes.

Charity

Charity is the love of God, because He is infinitely good, and the love of our neighbour for God's sake. Charity is shown by our observance of God's laws. Left to ourselves we could not keep God's Commandments. We need God's help or grace. This grace comes to us through certain channels. These channels are Prayer and the Sacraments.

Prayer

Prayer is the raising up of the soul to God. It is asking God for the graces we need, thanking God for the graces we have received, praising God for His goodness and perfection. Without prayer it is practically impossible to lead a good life. With prayer - regular, fervent prayer - we shall find it easy to save our souls. "Ask and you shall receive." Prayer must be humble, trusting and persevering. When it has these qualities and God sees that what we ask for would be good for our souls, our prayer will certainly be heard.

It is well that we should pray morning and night. Many go to rest at night and die before morning. But God has given us another day of life. Besides, each day brings its own dangers and difficulties. It is wise and fitting, then, that we should begin each morning with thanks to God, with earnest petition for His grace and protection during the day. Night comes and we find we have been guilty of many infidelities and even sins; it is well that before we retire to sleep we should express our sorrow and ask God's forgiveness for our offenses. In temptation, also, whenever it comes, we ought to beg God for the strength to overcome it.

Sacraments

The sacraments are instruments of grace made by Jesus Christ Himself. We are made of body and soul and are affected by what appeals to the senses, therefore Our Lord chose signs that the senses can perceive, and made those signs actual instruments of grace. If He had not made them the actual channels of His power they would have remained signs and nothing more. But He has made them signs of inward grace, which grace they actually produce in the soul. There are seven Sacraments, each corresponding to a great spiritual need in man.

Baptism

Baptism is the first of the Sacraments. When our first parents lost the beautifying grace of God, it was also lost to their descendants. The absence of that grace causes a stain in the soul which we call Original Sin. All the children of Adam are marked with that stain. The one exception is Mary. Because she was chosen by God to be His Mother He beautified her soul with His grace in the first moment of her existence. That privilege we call the Immaculate Conception. Baptism removes the stain of Original Sin and dowers the soul with sanctifying grace. It is the entrance gate to the Church and makes the recipient capable of receiving the other Sacraments. Baptism is a New Birth, a supernatural Birth, by which we become the Children of God. It leaves a mark on the soul, a mark of a Child of God.

Baptism is necessary for salvation. "Unless a man be born again of water and the spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Hence the necessity of the Baptism of children. Baptism can be validly administered by anyone who has the proper intention and who uses the correct form. He pours water on the child and at the same time says: "I baptise thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." A priest is the ordinary minister of Baptism. The child should have at least one god-parent, preferably two. Since godparents make themselves responsible for the Catholic upbringing of their godchild in case the parents neglect their duty, it follows that they should be Catholics. The child should be given a Christian name, the name of one of God's Saints.

Besides the Sacrament of Baptism there is *Baptism of Desire*, also called *Baptism of the Holy Ghost*. It is an act of

perfect contrition and of perfect charity. There is a third kind of Baptism called *Baptism of Blood*, by which one who has not received the Sacrament dies for the Christian Faith. The soul can be saved by either of these Baptisms, though Baptism of Desire does not dispense with the obligation of receiving the Sacrament of Baptism when opportunity arises. Whoever desires to do what God wishes him to do according to his knowledge has Baptism of Desire and can save his soul.

Confirmation

Confirmation is a Sacrament which makes us strong and perfect Christians. It increases Sanctifying grace in the soul and strengthens our faith. It also leaves a mark on the soul, the mark of a soldier of Christ. It is administered by a Bishop, who imposes hands on the person who is being confirmed, and anoints his forehead with Chrism, saying: "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Eucharist

The *Holy Eucharist* is called the Blessed Sacrament. It is Jesus Christ Himself under the appearance of bread and wine. Let us remember that when we speak of Jesus Christ we speak of God, Who, being Almighty, could change bread and wine into His body and blood. He made the universe out of nothing, He changed water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana, He gave us the physical mechanism by which bread and other food are changed into the tissue of our bodies. He is all-truthful. If He says He does a certain thing He does it. If He tells us that Holy Communion is His body and blood it is so. We can also recall that He fed 4,000 people with a few loaves and fishes and thus showed His power over nature. His body is a glorified body, which proved itself not to be subject to the laws of nature when He rose from and left the tomb, though a great stone covered it, and when He entered the room where His disciples were gathered together, though the doors were shut. The doctrine of the Church is that Jesus Christ, body and blood, soul and divinity, is really and truly present in the Blessed Sacrament under the appearances of bread and wine, and that His presence is brought about by Transubstantiation, which means that the substance of bread is changed into the substance of Our Lord's body and that substance of wine into His blood, the appearances of bread and wine remaining. Sometimes the example of a bar of iron is used to illustrate substance and appearances. The bar of iron has size, weight, colour and hardness, yet none of these makes it iron, for heat can alter its size, gravity and weight; heat can also change its colour from brown to red and even white, and can make its hardness soft and even liquid. What then makes it iron? Its substance, which is its one unchanging element, invisible and intangible, yet supporting its accidents of colour, shape

and weight. We might therefore describe Our Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament as being like the soul's presence in the body, wholly present in each part. Though the substance of bread is changed directly into Our Lord's body, yet since Our Lord Himself is not divided, where His body is there also must be His soul and divinity; therefore we receive Him whole and entire under the appearance of bread or under the appearance of wine.

How do we know Our Lord is really present in the Blessed Sacrament? He Himself has clearly told us. " The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." (John 6:5) No one was in a better position to know what He meant than His audience, who understood His language and heard every inflection of His voice and saw His every gesture. They certainly understood Him to mean that the true body and blood would be present, for they said: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" What was His reply? Did He say: "You have misunderstood Me, I am not going to give you My real bodily self in this Sacrament. I am going to give you merely bread and wine." No, He said: "Amen, amen, I say to you (which is like saying ' I swear to you") unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you." And when they further said: "This is a hard saying and who can bear it," and when they " went away and walked no more with Him," He did not say: "You must not leave Me, there is nothing difficult to understand in My teaching." Far from it. He turned to His disciples and said: "Will you also go away?" That is to say: "I will let even My Apostles leave Me rather than change and explain away the mystery of My love. My real and substantial presence in the Holy Eucharist." And Peter answered, saying: "To whom shall we go; Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:54-70)

That was the promise. The fulfillment came about the night before He died, when more than any other time He would

speak His mind unmistakably in simple words which even the poor, uneducated Apostles could not fail to understand. Taking bread into His hands, He "blessed and broke and gave to His disciples, and said 'Take ye and eat. This is My body.' And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them, saying 'Drink ye all of this, for this is the Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins. Do this for the Commemoration of Me.'" (Luke 22:20). "For as often as you shall eat this Bread and drink the Chalice you shall show forth the death of the Lord until He come." (I Corinthians 11:26)

His plain words expressed a plain truth, His real presence. Saint Paul tells us this was the belief of the Church. "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord? Whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the Chalice of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Why? Because "they do not discern the body of the Lord." (I Corinthians 11:26,27)

The Fathers of the Church, even the earliest of them, like Saint Ignatius (117), Saint Justin (157), Saint Ireneus (205) are clear in their statements of the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. "The Eucharist is the flesh of Our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Saint Ignatius Ep. ad Emyr.) "Wine and bread are by the word of God changed into the Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ." (Ireneus adv. Hones. V. 2, 2)

Visit the Roman Catacombs and you will see evidence of Catholic belief on the walls there, the basket of bread and wine changed into the fish, which represents Christ. It was the unquestioned belief of the whole Christian world till the sixteenth century, except for a slight ripple of doubt, which

disturbed for a little while in the eleventh century, the calm, untroubled surface of belief.

The Holy Eucharist is a Sacrament. It is also a Sacrifice. "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you that the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread and, giving thanks, broke and said: "Take ye and eat: this is My body that shall be delivered for you; this do for a commemoration of Me." In like manner, also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: "This chalice is the New Testament in My blood. This do ye, as often as you shall drink, for a commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat the bread and drink the Chalice you shall show forth the death of the Lord till He come." (I Corinthians 11:23,26) Here is the description of a rite which was a Sacrifice. Christ spoke of His body, which shall be delivered, i.e., put to death for you, a death that was represented by the separate consecration of the bread and wine. Christ Himself was the Victim and Christ Himself was the Priest of this Sacrifice. It represented the Sacrifice of the Cross that was to take place. The Mass is the self-same Sacrifice, in which Christ is Priest and Victim, but it represents the Sacrifice of the Cross that has taken place. The Mass is the continuation or perpetuation of the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is not a second sacrifice, it is the one sacrifice continued. Christ shed His blood and died once for all, and once for all paid the price for our redemption. The Mass is the self-same Sacrifice with the same Priest and the same Victim, but without the shedding of blood, and through it redemption is applied to individual souls. "Do this for a commemoration of Me," He said to His Apostles and their successors. The ordained Priest partakes of the priesthood of Christ that he might represent the great High Priest in offering up, through the power of His priesthood, the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Mass is divided into three principal parts: the Offertory, the Consecration and the Communion. At the Offertory the priest offers to God the bread and wine as the matter of the Sacrifice. At the Consecration he pronounces the words of Our Lord: "This is My body" over the bread, "This is My blood" over the wine, and by virtue of the power of God conveyed by these words the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. At the Communion the priest receives Holy Communion and after him those of the people who wish to communicate.

The Mass is said throughout the West in the Latin language. In the East it is said in Greek and in Syro-Chaldaic. Would it not be better, someone might ask, that Mass should be said in English? No. The Mass is something done rather than something said. It is not merely a prayer, it is a sacrifice. Were I to say to another: "I now make you a gift of one hundred pounds," it would not matter to him in what language I spoke, though the languages in which Mass is said are in fact better for their purpose than modern languages, for they are unchanging and, therefore, we have no doubt what a doctrine expressed in Latin nineteen hundred years ago really was: the meaning of their words then is their meaning today. Besides, the Catholic Church is not a local or national Church. It is universal; we who are members of it belong to a world-wide family, who all have the same act of worship, the Mass. Whether we visit France, Germany, Spain or Italy, we feel perfectly at home when we go to Church on Sunday morning, for we assist at the same Mass we are familiar with at home and it is said in the same language. Again, just as our Churches differ in appearance from other buildings and are edifices specially planned and built for the worship of God, it is meet that there should be a language of worship which takes us away more completely from the everyday mundane things of life. Mass was first said in the great languages of the time by priests who were

clad in the garments of the time. But though new languages later sprang up and fashions in dress changed, yet the languages first spoken and the vestments first worn for the Holy Sacrifice were consecrated to it for ever.

The Blessed Eucharist is a Sacrifice and Sacrament. As a Sacrament it is the food of the soul: it is Holy Communion. A Catholic who is solicitous for his soul receives Holy Communion frequently, at least once a month, very probably once a week, perhaps daily. For the worthy reception of Holy Communion a two-fold preparation is necessary-preparation of the body and preparation of the soul. Preparation of the body consists in fasting from midnight from all food and drink. Even the smallest quantity of food or drink, if swallowed after midnight, would be a bar to the reception of Holy Communion that day. An exception is made in the case of serious illness.

The preparation of the soul consists in freedom from mortal sin. Anyone conscious of mortal sin could not, while in that state, worthily receive Holy Communion. How can one who is in mortal sin secure freedom from it and so prepare for the reception of Holy Communion? By having recourse to the Sacrament of Penance, or, as is commonly said, by going to Confession.

Confession

Sin is an offence against God, therefore the power to forgive sin can only come from God. God can exercise that power through others. The State has power over life and death, as in the case of execution or a just war. But the State can delegate and does delegate this power to others. The judge as an ordinary man has no power to sentence to death. As a judge he wields the power of the State, and can say to the condemned man: "I sentence you to death." Jesus Christ was God as well as man. He became man to redeem us from sin. His whole life and death were concerned with sin. No one who had grievously sinned could be saved unless His sin was first forgiven. The forgiveness must come from God; but how? Our Lord made the Church to continue His work. "As the Father sent Me, I also send you." The Church's work must necessarily be concerned with the forgiveness of sin.

One day after the Resurrection, Christ appeared to the Apostles and said to them: "Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent Me I also send you." When He had said this He breathed on them and said to them: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, whose sins you shall retain they are retained." (John 20:22,23)

The God who had the power to forgive sin made His Apostles the instruments of that power. He deputed them to exercise that power. Can a priest then forgive sin? Certainly, but not by any power natural to himself, but by a power given to him by God for that purpose. God makes the priest a judge of the sinner. He has power to loose or to retain, to absolve or not to absolve. This is not a power to be used arbitrarily. He must absolve when the penitent's dispositions are good, when, that is, he is sorry for his sins and is determined to

avoid the occasions of his sins and not to sin again. How could the priest be sure of the presence of such dispositions unless he knew the sins? He must know that the drunkard will either give up intoxicating drink altogether or will avoid the persons and places that are a temptation to him. The dishonest must promise restitution. The impure must avoid the companion or the book that is the secret of their fall. How could the Confessor make sure of all this unless he knew of the drunkenness and the theft and the impurity?

Whoever knows that Our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Penance need not attempt to trace the origin of confession to priests and attribute to them, as a reason for its introduction, a desire on their part to gain an undue influence over the people. If Confession originated with the priests, when did it? It would surely be of such world-wide importance that history would be bound to record it. Yet there is no record. On the contrary, we find the practice of Confession back through the centuries. We find it in the East and the West. Within a hundred years of the death of Our Lord, the Montanists were driven out of the Church because they held that the power of forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance did not extend to certain very grievous sins. Origen, only 200 years after the death of Our Lord, said: "The layman who falls into sin cannot by himself wash it away He needs the priest; yes, at times he even goes to one greater than the priests, he needs even the Bishop's help that he may obtain forgiveness of his sin." (In Numeros, Horn. X.). Besides, it is sometimes forgotten that the priest himself not only hears confessions, which is very laborious work, but goes to Confession, and, being a human being, would scarcely have placed a heavy burden on his own shoulders without necessity. As for undue influence, how is it possible since no priest can ever under any circumstance break the seal of Confession or disclose any sin told him in Confession, no matter how small the sin; nor be in any way

influenced in his relations to others by anything told him in Confession.

It has been said that Confession has a deteriorating influence. That is not so. No one can speak with knowledge of Confession except Catholics, who practise it. Every Catholic knows that Confession is helpful, uplifting, purifying. Is it not a natural desire, when a secret trouble weighs down the soul, to open one's heart to another? The practical difficulty always is this: whom can I tell of my great burden of grief? A friend who can keep a secret and give effective sympathy is hard to find outside the Confessional. There is no secrecy in the world like the secrecy of the Confessor. There is no one with help and guidance such as he could give. Sin confessed means a load lifted, the heart lightened, the spirit brightened.

But again we hear that Confession must be an objectionable institution since a Catholic can say: "I will commit this sin because I can afterwards confess it." Confession is therefore an incentive to sin, or at least it makes sinning easy. People who make this assertion lose sight of the fact that *confession* is not the most important part of the Sacrament of Penance. *Contrition* or sorrow is the most important part. It is possible to obtain forgiveness of sins without Confession, but it is not possible without contrition or sorrow. Every Catholic knows this and knows that the sorrow must be genuine - sorrow for having endangered the salvation of the soul, sorrow for having offended God, who died on the Cross for love of us, sorrow for having sinned against the good God Who is infinite in all perfections. Such sorrow implies the resolve never to sin again.

The penitent is bound to confess all mortal sins not yet confessed. He confesses his own sins, not the sins of others. The Confessor is concerned with that person's soul only, not

with the interests or business of others. The Confession should be short and with no detail except what is necessary to explain the nature and gravity of the sins confessed. The penitent receives a penance, which has Sacramental value as satisfaction for sin and which is generally a prayer.

I need hardly say that Confession should be seriously prepared for, first, by Examination of Conscience, which consists in a diligent effort to recall our sins to mind; secondly, by praying for sorrow for our sins and meditating on the greatness and goodness of God, on His Passion and Death, on the fearful consequences of sin and on our personal risk of losing our souls because of our sins.

Extreme Unction

When Catholics are dangerously ill they receive the Sacrament called *Extreme Unction*. Our Lord has provided helps for every stage of life and for all life's great responsibilities. Help is particularly needed when we are about to die. This Sacrament is administered by a priest. It increases grace in the soul, it remits sin, it brings consolation to the sick person and sometimes it helps to bring about bodily recovery.

As all sin comes through the senses, they are anointed. When the priest anoints the eyes, he says: "Through this Holy Chrism and His own most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed through the sense of sight." Similarly he anoints the ears, nostrils, hands and feet, a change in the final words being made to correspond to the particular sense. We know from Saint James that this Sacrament was received by the faithful in his day as it is today. "Is anyone sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord shall raise him up and if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him." (James 5:14,15)

Besides receiving Extreme Unction, the sick person also receives Holy Communion, which when given to the sick is called Viaticum or food for the journey. Catholics attach supreme importance to the reception of the Last Sacraments (as these two Sacraments are called). It is therefore a great act of charity to send for a priest when a Catholic is dangerously ill.

Holy Orders

Holy Orders is a Sacrament by which the gift of the Holy Ghost is so given to a man that he can validly perform the sacred duties of deacon, Priest or Bishop. It leaves a sacramental character, a mark on the soul.

The Priest receives the power of forgiving sins and offering the Sacrifice of the Mass. The Bishop has the power of conferring Holy Orders and giving Confirmation. He has the Fulness of the Priesthood and through the power of Bishops the power of the Priesthood is continued in the Church.

Matrimony

Matrimony is a Sacrament that enables husband and wife to live happily together and to bring up their children in the love and fear of God.

Matrimony is a Sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ. "The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the Church Husbands love your wives as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it that He might sanctify it." (Ephesians 5:23,24) Saint Paul tells us that the union of husband and wife is an image of the union of Christ and His Church. Therefore it is a sacred union, a union by which grace is conferred on the souls of both. It has ever been regarded as a Sacrament by the Church. One of the pictures in the Catacombs represents Our Lord blessing the union of a man and a woman, thus showing the belief that the union was a Sacrament. Since it is one of the seven Sacraments instituted by Our Lord, it is the mission and the duty of the Church to safeguard it and to lay down the conditions for its validity. Marriage is a contract and it is for the Church to prescribe what is necessary that it should be validly and lawfully executed. In this matter the Church legislates only for her own children. A mixed marriage may not take place without a dispensation, which can only be given by the Bishop for grave reasons. It is true of a mixed marriage, as of marriages in which both contracting parties are Catholics, that to be valid it must take place in the presence of an authorised priest and two witnesses. Otherwise it is not valid in the eyes of God. A marriage is legally valid provided the conditions laid down by the State are complied with; but it is clear that a marriage might be *legally* valid but *invalid* in the eyes of God and therefore no Sacrament.

The main purpose of the union of husband and wife is to bring children into the world. Birth Prevention is a grievous sin. It is bad physically and morally for those who practise it. It is bad for the nation and is in fact a sign of national decadence; it is opposed to nature and therefore condemned by the conscience, even if there was no law of religion to enlighten it. There is indeed such a law, for birth-prevention was forbidden by the old Jewish Law as it is by the Church today.

Marriage is indissoluble. Divorce is contrary to the Christian Law. Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder. No man validly married may contract a marriage with another woman while his wife is living. No woman validly married may contract a marriage with another man while her husband is living. Such a contract would be null and void.

The parents are bound to give their children a Catholic education. It is their right and duty to educate their children. The purpose of education is to train the child how to live. The life for which the child was made is life eternal. Religion is a necessary part of true education. The only religion a Catholic recognises and believes is the Catholic religion. That a mixed marriage may take place in the Catholic Church, the non-Catholic must sign a promise to bring up all the children of the marriage in the Catholic Faith. This promise implies the obligation to give them a Catholic education.

Sacramentals

Besides Sacraments, there are Sacramentals, which are indeed signs but do not produce grace. They excite in us certain dispositions to acquire grace. *Holy Water* is such a sacramental. Water suggests cleansing, and the practice of taking it as we enter Church is useful, inasmuch as by that practice we are reminded that we ought to cleanse our souls. *Blessed Ashes* remind us that we must one day die. *Blessed Palms* remind us that the glory of the world is fleeting and that victory can only come through Jesus Christ.

Devotions

Devotions are the outward dress of our religion, they are the expression of our piety. Some favour one devotion, some another. One of the devotions most commonly practised by Catholics is the *Rosary*. The prayers said in the Rosary are almost entirely taken from Holy Scripture: the Our Father first said by Jesus Christ Himself, the Hail Mary first said by the Angel Gabriel - or, rather, by God the Father, for was not the Angel Gabriel His messenger? Just as Our Lord Himself in praying said the self-same words over and over again, so do we in the Rosary. Of prayer, He says: "*Ask* and you shall receive, *seek* and you shall find, *knock* and it shall be opened unto you." How monotonous is the petition of the needy beggar, the knock of the anxious visitor, the searching for what we have mislaid and want so much to find. This should be remembered when the criticism is made that the Rosary is a string of monotonous repetitions. The Rosary has a beauty and variety unknown to the uninstructed. In the Rosary, while our lips move in prayer and our hands are feeling the beads, our minds are fixed now on one scene, now on another of Our Lord's life: these scenes exciting fresh interests and stimulating our trust and hope and love. The beads used enable us to say the fixed number of prayers that make up the Rosary, and to separate scene from scene, mystery from mystery.

Another very popular devotion is the *Stations of the Cross*. By this devotion we meditate, with the help of pictures which can be seen in all our Churches, on the successive stages of Our Lord's Passion.

The wearing of the *Scapular* is also a devotional practice which it is well to explain. As we saw above, we are members

one of another, we can help one another by our prayers and can share in the merits of others. Those who are members of Religious Orders lead lives of extraordinary prayer and self-denial. In our desire to participate in their merits we can become external Associates of certain religious orders, v.g., the Carmelites, with an undertaking on our part to make our life more spiritual and prayerful. As a sign of such authorised Associations we wear an official badge, which is called a Scapular, after a part of the religious habit which is so named.

About This EBook

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